Wikiquote

Four Noble Truths

Revision as of 05:22, 12 February 2024 by Don Stroud (talk | contribs) *(→As a general scheme of systems of Indian philosophy: err. publ date)*
(diff) ← Older revision | Latest revision (diff) | Newer revision → (diff)

The **Four Noble Truths** are the Essence of Gautama Buddha's Teachings, which say that suffering is caused by ignorance, and can be overcome by following these teachings.

The *Four Noble Truths* are the Essence of Gautama Buddha's Teachings, which say that suffering is caused by ignorance, and can be overcome...

The Four Noble Truths

- 1. Dukkha: Suffering exists: Life is suffering. Suffering is real and almost universal. Suffering has many causes: loss, sickness, pain, failure, and the impermanence of pleasure.
- 2. Samudaya: There is a cause of suffering. Suffering is due to attachment. It is the desire to have and control things. It can take many forms: craving of sensual pleasures; the desire for fame; the desire to avoid unpleasant sensations, like fear, anger or jealousy.
- 3. Nirodha: There is an end to suffering. Attachment can be overcome. Suffering ceases with the final liberation of Nirvana (Nibbana). The mind experiences complete freedom, liberation and non-attachment. It lets go of any desire or craving.
- 4. Magga: In order to end suffering, follow the Eightfold Path
  - '*UNHCR Buddhist Core Values... the Background of Buddhism*(pdf file) (https://www.unhcr.org/50be10cb9.pdf) (20 November 2012)

The Eightfold Path

The eightfold path says that truth is found in the Middle Way. A person can get to the Middle Way by following the eightfold path. The eight parts are these:

- Right Vision. A person should try to see things the way they really are.
- Right Values. A person should try to turn their mind away from the world and towards the Dharma.
- Right Speech. A person should try to be truthful and kind when they talk.
- Right Actions. A person should try to do good things. If they can not do a good thing, then they should try to not do a bad thing.
- Right Livelihood. A person should not work at something that can hurt themselves or other people.
- Right Effort. A person should try to increase their goodness and get rid of their evil.
- Right Mindfulness. A person must remember the Dharma and use it all the time
- Right Meditation. A person must try to reach enlightenment through meditation.
  - Simplewikipedia (https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Noble_Truths#The_Eightfold_Path)

Quotes about the Four Noble Truths

Life is suffering. Suffering is real and almost universal. Suffering has many causes: loss, sickness, pain, failure, and the impermanence of pleasure.

The Buddha taught that misery and suffering were of man's own making, and that the focusing of human desire upon the undesirable, the ephemeral and the material, was the cause of all despair, all hatred and competition... ~ Alice Bailey

- The Buddha came approximately five hundred years before Christ... Buddha answered the questions posited in His time by giving the **Four Noble Truths**, which satisfactorily and eternally answer man's demand of why. These Truths can be summarized as follows: the Buddha taught that misery and suffering were of man's own making, and that the focussing of human desire upon the undesirable, the ephemeral and the material, was the cause of all despair, all hatred and competition...
  - Alice Bailey in The Reappearance of the Christ, p.106 (https://www.lucistrust.org/online_books/the_reappearance_the_christ) (1948)
- Characterized as are all the teachings of the Blessed One by brevity, they are instinct with wisdom: for just as on each one of the **Four Noble Truths**, volumes of exposition may be written, so in the phrases of this Noble Eightfold Path, the whole law of life, the whole rule of conduct, is definitely expressed; and if a man should follow that Eightfold path, if a man should carry out the eight directions that are given, then that man would bridge the threshold of Arhatship, and he would prepare himself for liberation.
  - Annie Besant in a lecture on The Noble Eightfold Path, (https://cdn.website-editor.net/e4d6563c50794969b714ab70457d9761/files/uploaded/AdyarPamphlet_No192.pdf#) delivered at the Ananda College, Colombo, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in 1907.
- Buddhism's famed Four Truths are called noble because they liberate us from suffering. They are the Buddha's basic teaching, encapsulating the entire Buddhist path.
  - Melvin McLeod in "What Are the Four Noble Truths?" (https://www.lionsroar.com/what-are-the-four-noble-truths/) (12 March 2018)
- 120. Q. What is the light that can dispel this ignorance of ours and remove all sorrows? A. The knowledge of the **Four Noble Truths**, as the Buddha called them... 1. The miseries of evolutionary existence resulting in births and deaths, life after life. 2. The cause productive of misery, which is the selfish desire, ever renewed, of satisfying one's self, without being able ever to secure that end. 3. The destruction of that desire, or the estranging of one's self from it. 4. The means of obtaining this destruction of desire...
- 124. Q. How can we escape the sufferings which result from unsatisfied desires and ignorant cravings? A. By complete conquest over, and destruction of, this eager thirst for life and its pleasures, which causes sorrow.... By following the **Noble Eight-fold Path** which the Buddha discovered and pointed out... 1. Right Belief (as to the law of Causation, or Karma); 2. Right Thought; 3. Right Speech; 4. Right Action; 5. Right Means of Livelihood; 6. Right Exertion; 7. Right Remembrance and Self-discipline; 8. Right Concentration of Thought. The man who keeps these angas in mind and follows them will be free from sorrow and ultimately reach salvation.
  - Henry Steel Olcott in The Buddhist Catechism (http://www.gutenberg.org/files/30216/30216-h/30216-h.htm) (1903)

The Masters and the Path by C.W. Leadbeater, (1925)

p. 301-314; (Full text online (https://www.theosophy.world/resource/ebooks/masters-and-path-cw-leadbeater))

Suffering exists: Life is suffering.... Suffering is due to attachment... the desire to have and control things... There is an end to suffering....In order to end suffering... follow the Eightfold Path.

- ...the Lord Buddha lays these down for us in what he has called the Four Noble Truths. These are:
- 1. Sorrow or Suffering.

  2. The Cause of Sorrow.
  3. The Ceasing of Sorrow (or the Escape from Sorrow).
  4. The Way which leads to the Escape from Sorrow.

- 1. **The First Truth** is an assertion that all manifested life is sorrow, unless man knows how to live it. In commenting upon this, the Bodhisattva said that there are two senses in which manifested life is sorrowful. One of these is to some extent inevitable, but the other is an entire mistake and is very easily to be avoided...Even though we may be only a tiny fragment—indeed, a fragment of a fragment—we are nevertheless a part of a magnificent reality. There is nothing to be proud of in being only a fragment, but there is a certainty that because we are therefore part of the higher, we can eventually rise into the higher and become one therewith. That is the end and aim of our evolution. And even when we attain that, remember that it is not for the sake of our delight in the advancement, but that we may be able to help in the scheme. All these sacrifices and limitations may rightly be described as involving suffering; but they are undertaken gladly as soon as the ego [soul/God within] fully understands. An ego has not the perfection of the Monad, and so he does not fully understand at first; he has to learn like everybody else. ..

- There is another sense in which life is often sorrow, but a kind of sorrow that can be entirely avoided. The man who lives the ordinary life of the world often finds himself in trouble of various kinds. It would not be true to say that he is always in sorrow, but he is often in anxiety, and he is always liable at any moment to fall into great sorrow or anxiety. The reason for this is that he is full of lower desires of various kinds, not at all necessarily wicked, but desires for lower things; and because of these desires he is tied down and confined. He is constantly striving to attain something which he has not, and he is full of anxiety as to whether he will attain it; and when he has attained it, he is anxious lest he should lose it. This is true not only of money but of position and power, of fame and of social advancement. All these cravings cause incessant trouble in many different ways.

- How often, for example, a young man desires affection from someone who cannot give it to him, who has it not to give! From such a desire as that comes often a great deal of sadness, jealousy and much other ill-feeling. You will say that such a desire is natural; undoubtedly it is, and affection which is returned is a great source of happiness. Yet if it cannot be returned, a man should have the strength to accept the situation, and not allow sorrow to be caused by the unsatisfied desire.

- When we say that a thing is natural, we mean that it is what we might expect from the average man. But the student of occultism must try to rise somewhat above the level of the average man—otherwise how can he help that man? We must rise above that level in order that we may be able to reach down a helping hand. We must aim not at the natural (in the sense of the average), but at the supernatural.

- One who is clairvoyant will readily subscribe to the truth of this great teaching of the Buddha, that on the whole life is sorrow; for if he looks at the astral and mental bodies of those whom he meets he will see that they are filled with a vast number of small vortices all whirling vigorously, representing all sorts of odd little thoughts, little anxieties, little troubles about one thing or another. All these cause disturbance and suffering, and what is needed most of all for progress is serenity. The only way to gain peace is to get rid of them altogether, and that brings us to our Second Noble Truth, the Cause of Sorrow.

- 2. We have already seen that the **Cause of Sorrow** is always desire. If a man has no desires, if he is not striving for place or power or wealth, then he is equally tranquil whether the wealth or position comes or whether it goes. He remains unruffled and serene because he does not care. Being human, he will of course wish for this or that, but always mildly and gently, so that he does not allow himself to be disturbed...

- 3. **The Ceasing of Sorrow.** Already we see how grief ceases and how calm is to be attained; it is by always keeping the thought on the highest things. We have still to live in this world, which has been poetically described as the sorrowful star—as indeed it is for so many, perhaps for most people, though it need not be; yet we may live in it quite happily if we are not attached to it by desire. We are in it, but we must not be of it—at least not to such an extent as to let it cause worry and trouble and vexation... Undoubtedly our duty is to help others in their afflictions and troubles and worries; but in order to do that effectively we must have none of our own; we must let those ruffles which might cause them slip smoothly past us, leaving us calm and contented. If we take this lower life with philosophy we shall find that for us sadness almost entirely ceases.

- There may be some who think such an attitude unattainable. It is not so, for if it were the Lord Buddha would never have prescribed it for us. We can all reach it, and, we ought to do so, because only when we have attained it can we really and effectively help our brother man.

- 4.**The Way which leads to the Escape from Sorrow.** This is given to us in what is called the **Noble Eightfold Path**... it can be taken at all levels. The man in the world, even the uneducated man, can take it in its lowest aspects and find a way to peace and comfort through it. And yet the highest philosopher may also take it and interpret it at his level and learn very much from it.

Noble Eightfold Path

- **The first step in this Path is Right Belief**. Some people object to that qualification, because they say that it demands from them something in the nature of blind faith. It is not at all that sort of belief which is required; it is rather a demand for a certain amount of knowledge as to the ruling factors in life. It demands that we shall understand a little of the Divine Scheme as far as it applies to us, and if we cannot yet see that for ourselves, that we should accept it as it is always put before us. Certain broad facts are always put before men in some form or other. They are explained even to savage tribes by their medicine-men, and to the rest of mankind by various religious teachers and in all kinds of scriptures. It is very true that scriptures and religions differ, but the points in which they all agree have to be accepted by a man before he can understand life sufficiently to live happily.
  One of these facts is the eternal Law of Cause and Effect. If a man lives under the delusion that he can do anything that he likes, and that the effect of his actions will never recoil upon himself, he will most certainly find that some of these actions eventually involve him in unhappiness and suffering. If, again, he does not understand that the object of his life is progress, that God's Will for him is that he shall grow to be something better and nobler than he is now, then also he will bring unhappiness and suffering upon himself, because he will be likely to live for the lower side of life only, and that lower side of life never finally satisfies the inner man.

- **The second step of the Noble Eightfold Path is Right Thought**... demands that we should think about right things and not about wrong things.... Right Thought must never have the slightest touch of evil in it... we should think the truth only.... by fixing our attention on the evil in the man instead of the good, we strengthen and encourage that evil; whereas by Right Thought we might give just the same encouragement to the good side of that man's nature.

- **The next stage is Right Speech** and here again we find just the same two divisions. First, we should speak always of good things. It is not our business to speak of the evil deeds of others. In most cases the stories about other people which reach us are not true, and so if we repeat them our words also are untrue, and we are doing harm to ourselves as well as to the person of whom we speak. And even if the story is true it is still wrong to repeat it...We should always bear in mind that our thought, our speech and our action are not merely qualities, but powers—powers given to us to use, for the use of which we are directly responsible.

- We come now to the **fifth step—Right Means of Livelihood—**and that is a matter which may touch quite a large number of us. The right means of livelihood is that which causes no harm to any living thing. We see at once that that would rule out such trades as those of a butcher... We should not obtain our livelihood by

harming any creature... A right means of livelihood may become a wrong means if it is treated in a wrong way. We must deal as honestly with people as we should wish them to deal with us...

- The **sixth step is Right Exertion or Right Endeavour**, and it is a very important one. We must not be content to be negatively good. What is desired of us is not merely absence of evil, but the positive doing of good. When the Lord Buddha made that wonderful short statement of his doctrine in a single verse, he began by saying: “Cease to do evil,” but the next line runs: “Learn to do good.” Right Exertion means putting our work into useful lines and not wasting it... We must look about and see where our exertion would be most useful.
- **Right Memory or Right Remembrance is the seventh step**, and it means many things....First of all it means self-recollectedness. It means that we must remember all the time who we are, what our work is, what is our duty, and what we should be doing...
- The **last step is called Right Meditation or Right Concentration**. This refers not only to the set meditation which we perform as part of our discipline, but it also means that all through our lives we should concentrate ourselves on the object of doing good and of being useful and helpful... We cannot always have our consciousness drawn away from the physical plane to higher levels; yet it is possible to live a life of meditation in this sense—that the higher things are always so strongly present in the background of our minds that, as I said when speaking about Right Thought, they may instantly come to the front when that mind is not otherwise occupied. Our life will then be really a life of perpetual meditation upon the highest and noblest objects, interrupted now and then by the necessity of putting our thoughts into practice in daily life. Such a habit of thought will influence us in more ways than we see at the first glance.
- This is the teaching of the Lord Buddha as he gave it in that first Sermon; it is upon this teaching that the world-wide Kingdom of Righteousness is founded, the Royal Chariot-Wheels of which He set in motion for the first time on that Asala Festival so many centuries ago.

As a general scheme of systems of Indian philosophy

- All Indian philosophical systems professed to be doctrines of salvation. They, therefore, start from the conception of a whole (sarvam), which is then split into two halves, phenomenal life and the Absolute (samsara и nirvana). The phenomenal part is further divided into an analysis of its actual condition (duhkha), its driving forces (duhkha-samudaya) and their gradual extinction (marga). When this extinction 'nirodha' is reached, life merges into the Absolute about whose essence a variety of constructions exist. These four topics, the four "noble truths" as the term has been very inadequately translated and represented as a fundamental principle of Buddhism, contain, — in reality, no doctrine at all. It is only a scheme for philosophical constructions and is accepted as such by all Indian systems without exception. They cover indeed, the Indian conception of philosophy. Uddyotakara says, "these are the four topics which are investigated by every philosopher in every system of metaphysics". Accordingly every philosophical system must contain an analysis of the elements of life, a doctrine about its driving forces, a doctrine of the Absolute and a doctrine about the method to be followed in order to escape out of phenomenal life and become merged in the Absolute.
  - Fyodor Shcherbatskoy in The Conception Of Buddhist Nirvana, p.89 (https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.49734/) (1927)

See also

- Ageless Wisdom teachings
- Gautama Buddha
- Buddhism
- Five Precepts (of Buddhism)

External links

Retrieved from "https://en.wikiquote.org/w/index.php?title=Four_Noble_Truths&oldid=3463762"